3. ACCESSING ACS DATA

American FactFinder (AFF) is the U.S. Census Bureau's primary tool for accessing population, housing, and economic data from the American Community Survey (ACS), the decennial census, and many other Census Bureau data sets.[13] AFF provides comprehensive access to pretabulated ACS data for a wide range of geographic areas, including states, cities, counties, American Indian and Alaska Native areas, census tracts, and block groups. Data users interested in accessing data for these geographic areas are encouraged to refer to the section on "Accessing ACS Data" in the Census Bureau's handbook on *Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What All Data Users Need to Know*.[14]

Data users can access pretabulated data for urban/rural areas as well as metropolitan statistical areas, micropolitan statistical areas, and areas outside of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas through the "Geographic Components" option in AFF. A geographic component is the portion of a geographic area that meets certain criteria, such as "in a metropolitan statistical area" or "in a rural area." Geographic components are available for the nation, regions, divisions, and for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

ACS data are tabulated for 15 different geographic components, including urban, rural, in metropolitan statistical area, in micropolitan statistical area, in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, and several others.

To select a geographic component:

- Go to AFF at <https://factfinder.census.gov> and click on "Advanced Search" and then "Show Me All."

- Click on "Topics" in the left-hand navigation and select the ACS data set of interest. In the example below, we expanded "Dataset," then selected the "2016 ACS 1-year estimates" (see Figure 3.1). Then click "Close" in the top right corner of the box.

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[13] U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov/>.

[14] U.S. Census Bureau, *Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What All Data Users Need to Know,* <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/handbooks/general.html>.

Figure 3.1. **Selecting a Data set in AFF**
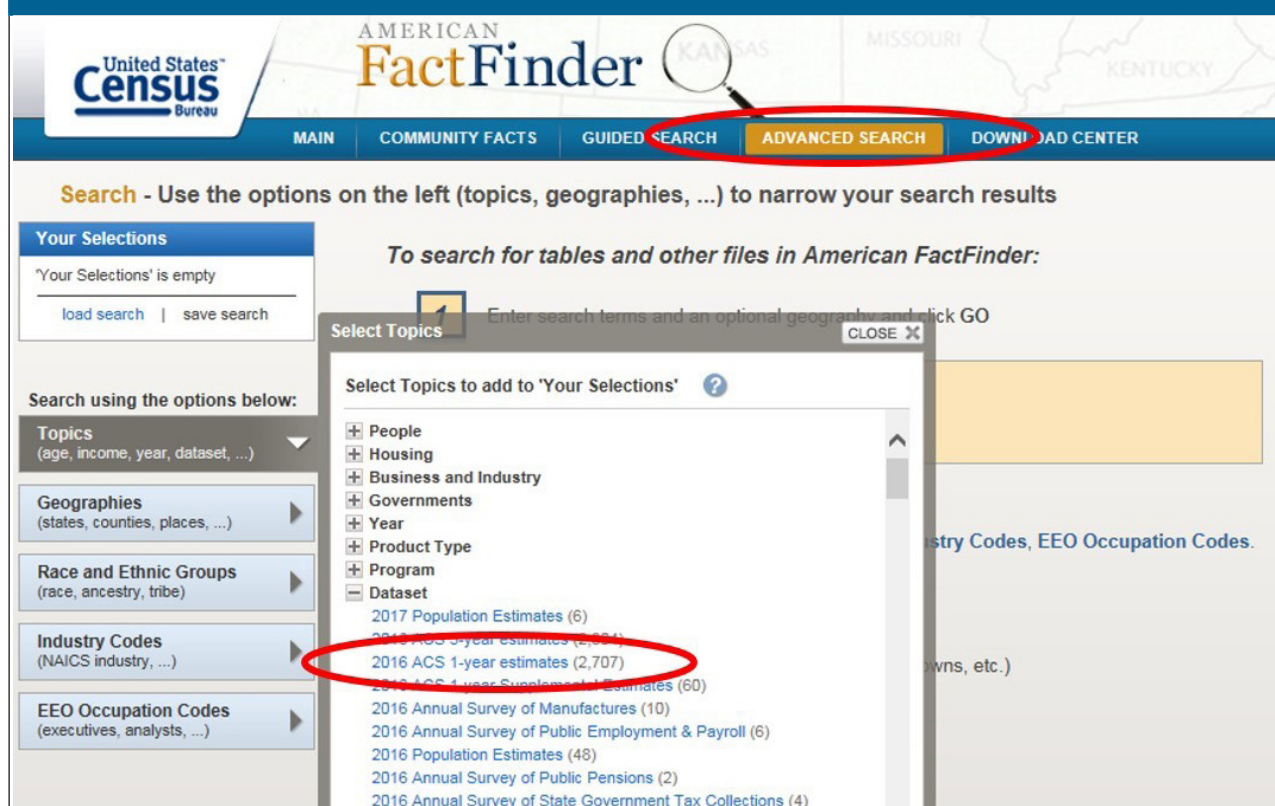
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov>.

- Next, click on "Geographies" in the left-hand navigation and then click on the "Name" tab to display a detailed list of "Geography Filter Options." Mark the check box near the bottom labeled "Show Geographic Components (e.g., urban, rural)." Then type "Texas" into the search box to bring up a list of geographic areas of interest. In this example, we are interested in:
  - o Texas
  - o Texas – Urban
  - o Texas – Rural

- Verify that your geography selections (for example, Texas, Texas—Rural, Texas—Urban) appear in the "Your Selections" box in the upper left corner of AFF (see Figure 3.2). Then click "Close" in the top right corner of the box.

Figure 3.2. **Selecting Geographic Components in AFF**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov>.

- For this example, enter "B19013" into the yellow "Refine your search results" box and click "GO" (see Figure 3.3). B19013 is the Table ID for MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2016 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS).

Figure 3.3. **Selecting Tables in AFF**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov>.

- Click on the table title corresponding to Table B19013 and select it to view the results.

- The results suggest that in Texas, median household income in 2016 was higher in rural areas ($60,424) than urban areas ($55,971) (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. **Viewing Results in AFF**

	Texas		Texas -- Urban		Texas -- Rural	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Median household income in the past 12 months (in 2016 inflation-adjusted dollars)	56,565	+/-300	55,971	+/-304	60,424	+/-657

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, <https://factfinder.census.gov>.

Figure 3.6 shows an example of a PUMA consisting of five adjacent counties in eastern Kentucky that comprise the Big Sandy Area Development District (Kentucky PUMA 01100). In this case, all of the counties making up the PUMA are outside of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, but other PUMAs may be located entirely within metropolitan statistical areas, or include combinations of metropolitan counties, micropolitan counties, and counties outside of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas.

Figure 3.6. Big Sandy Area Development District (Kentucky PUMA 01100)
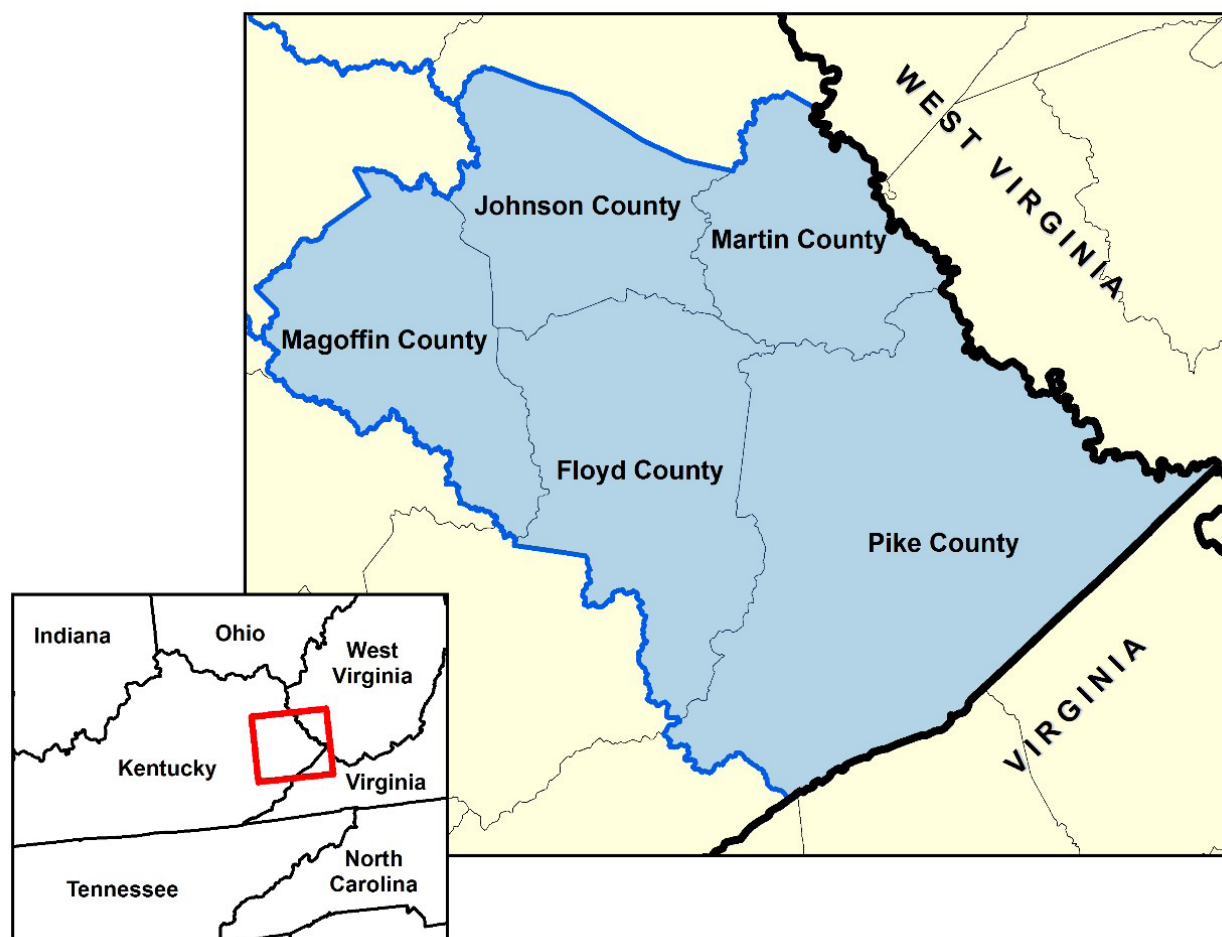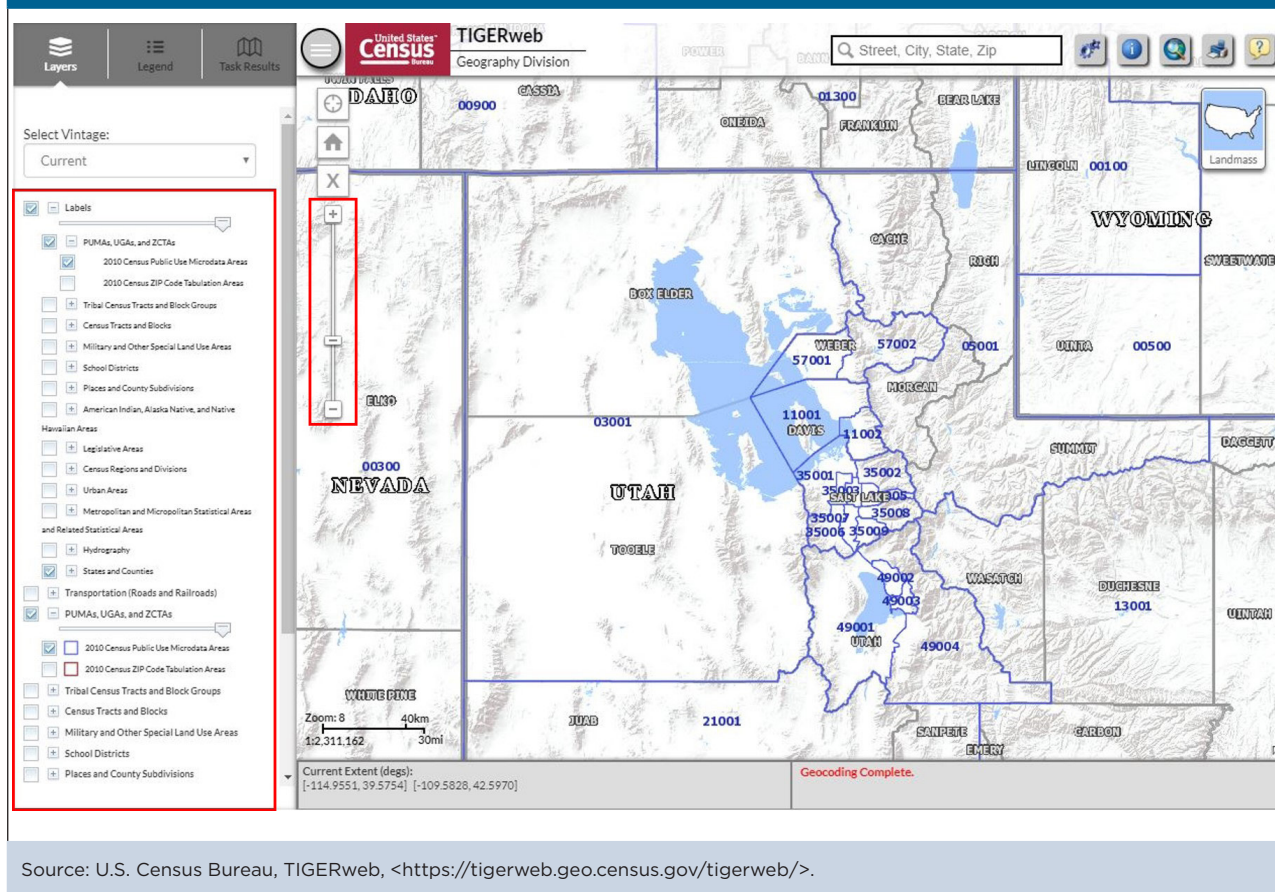

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Data users can visualize PUMAs online using the Census Bureau's TIGERweb application.[16]

- Go to the TIGERweb Web site at <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerweb/>.

- Use the Zoom In feature on the map—by clicking on the individual plus sign or using the slide bar—to display a geographic area of interest.

- Then use the "Layers" menu to select "2010 Census Public Use Microdata Areas." Figure 3.7 shows a TIGERweb map of PUMA boundaries in portions of Utah and other states in the Mountain West.

Figure 3.7. **Map of PUMAs in Portions of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, TIGERweb, <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerweb/>.

For more information about using TIGERweb, see the Census Bureau's TIGERweb User Guide.[17]

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[16] U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division, TIGERweb, <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerweb/>.
[17] U.S. Census Bureau, TIGERweb User Guide, <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerwebmain/TIGERweb_User_Guide.pdf>.